

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00902 160838Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 INT-05 /042 W
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P 160415Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3370
INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0902

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEP, PINT, BP
SUBJECT: POLITICAL FUROR IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

REF: PORT MORESBY 526

1. SUMMARY: PUBLICATION IN GOVERNMENT PRESS OF A POEM
CONTAINING SCATHING ATTACK ON WESTERN DISTRICT'S DESIRE FOR
INCREASED AUTONOMY HAS BROUGHT CHIEF MINISTER KENILOREA UNDER
SEVERE CRITICISM. WESTERN DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES IN
CABINET CALLING FOR KENILOREA'S RESIGNATION AND POST-
PONEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE. HOWEVER, EXCEPTIONALLY WELL
INFORMED OBSERVERS BELIEVE CRISIS WILL PASS WITH LITTLE OR NO
IMMEDIATE IMPACT EXCEPT, PERHAPS, WESTERN DISTRICT'S
BOYCOTT OF CEREMONIES. NEVERTHELESS, KENILOREA'S PRIME
MINISTRY MAY BE IN JEOPARDY WHEN PARLIAMENT MEETS IN
AUGUST. WE FORESEE NO LIKELIHOOD OF ANY UNTOWARDS INCIDENTS
WHICH COULD MAR PARTICIPATION OF U.S. DELEGATION TO
INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIES. END SUMMARY.

2. GSI WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, NEWS DRUM, OF JUNE 9 CARRIED
A LONG POEM WHICH WAS SCATHING ATTACK ON WESTERN DISTRICT'S
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CALLS (REFTEL) FOR STATE GOVERNMENT OR GREATER AUTONOMY
IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. POEM WAS RADICAL DEPARTURE
FROM MELANESIAN PRACTICE AND ITS PUBLICATION IN
GOVERNMENT PRESS ENRAGED WESTERN DISTRICT PEOPLE. TO MAKE
MATTERS WORSE, POEM BELIEVED (BY EVERYONE) TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY
FRANCIS SAEMALA, PRIVATE SECRETARY TO CHIEF MINISTER
KENILOREA.

3. WHEN NEWS DRUM HIT STREETS, HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER HILLY, A WESTERN DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE, STATED HE WAS RESIGNING AND FLEW HOME. SEVERAL MINISTERS CALLED FOR SAEMALA'S DISMISSAL BUT KENILOREA REPLIED SAEMALA WAS HIS SECRETARY, NOT A PUBLIC SERVANT, AND HE WOULD REMAIN. CHIEF MINISTER WENT ON RADIO EVENING JUNE 13, TOLD NATION ERROR HAD BEEN MADE AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST PERSON RESPONSIBLE.

4. HILLY RETURNED HONIARA JUNE 14 (DEPUTY GOVERNOR TOLD EMBOFF FORMAL RESIGNATION HAD NOT BEEN TENDERED) AND CABINET MET ON JUNE 15. EMBOFF RETURNED TO MORESBY AFTER LUNCH BUT WAS TOLD WESTERN DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES WERE CALLING FOR KENILOREA'S RESIGNATION AND POSTPONEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE. TWO OF SOLOMON ISLANDS BEST AND MOST INFORMED OBSERVERS, FRANCIS BUGOTU, PERMANENT SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER, AND WILLIE BETU, LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENT BLOC IN ASSEMBLY (LARGEST BLOC IN ASSEMBLY AND SUPPORTER OF GOVERNMENT), BOTH SAID KENILOREA WOULD WEATHER THE STORM. STATED ONLY IMMEDIATE IMPACT MIGHT BE TWOFOLD-SOMEONE WOULD GET AXED AND WESTERN DISTRICT MIGHT BOYCOTT INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS. HOWEVER, BOTH BELIEVED THAT PROBLEM SO SERIOUS IT COULD COST KENILOREA PRIME MINISTRY WHEN PARLIAMENT NEXT MEETS IN AUGUST.

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5. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER KENILOREA HAD APPROVED PUBLICATION OF POEM BUT CONSENSUS AMONG NON-WESTERN DISTRICT PEOPLE IS THAT HE HAD NOT. PRINCIPAL INFORMATION OFFICER, FRANCIS MAULI, WHO EDITS NEWS DRUM, TOLD EMBOFF HE HAD LOOKED AT POEM FROM LITERARY ANGLE AND NOT FROM POLITICAL ANGLE WHEN HE APPROVED ITS PUBLICATION. WHETHER HE COVERING UP FOR SUPERIORS OR IS INCREDIBLY NAIVE, WE KNOW NOT. IN ANY EVENT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IMPACT WILL BE SUCH THAT VISITING DELEGATIONS WILL EVEN BE AWARE OF POLITICAL PROBLEM OR THAT INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS WILL BE AFFECTED.
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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 16 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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From: PORT MORESBY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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